

Scott Walker
Governor

Ed Wall
Secretary



State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Mailing Address

3099 E. Washington Ave.
Post Office Box 7925
Madison, WI 53707-7925
Telephone (608) 240-5000
Fax (608) 240-3300

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By Brandon Best
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Contact: Joy Staab
(608) 240-5060

DOC Employee recognized for “Inspirational” Career of Service

Appleton, Wis. – Tom Smith, a Sex Offender Registry Specialist, received the Career Service Award at Outagamie county’s Best Badge Awards Ceremony for his 32 years of service to the DOC. He was recommended by nominations submitted from Matt Kuether, an Appleton Police Department Investigator, and Melinda Tempelis, an Assistant District Attorney. More than 150 people attended the awards ceremony at Liberty Hall on April 9, where all law enforcement jurisdictions of Outagamie County were represented. The event was sponsored by the county’s District Attorney Office.

Smith was presented with a plaque and copies of the nominations from Tempelis and Kuether. “I am very grateful to Mindy and Matt for recognizing me with such unbelievably kind words,” said Smith. “I am truly honored to be able to work with them.”

Nicole Hall, one of Smith’s many coworkers who attended the ceremony, “wholeheartedly” supported the award. “The nominations were absolutely amazing testimonials of Tom’s professionalism and dedication to the Sex Offender Registry and to his community partners,” Hall said. “It was clearly a proud moment for Tom, his parents and the rest of his family.”

Tempelis described an especially challenging case, where Smith had to announce to the community the release of a sex offender. The offender was convicted of sexual assaulting and murdering a minor. The neighborhood was incensed, but she thanked Smith for his tactful response to the situation. Tempelis said, “It’s really something to be able to see. He can take a really difficult situation and make it turn out to be something where people walk away feeling they were listened to, feeling like questions were answered, and feeling like they have an understanding of the process.”

“It was a very humbling experience, to have such great things said about you, when all you were really trying to do, throughout your career, was just doing your job, and doing it to the best of your ability,” Smith stated.

Smith began his DOC career as a correctional officer at Green Bay Correctional Institution. After two years, he transferred to the Wisconsin Resource Center where Smith achieved the rank of Correctional Officer II and Correctional Officer III. In 1993, Smith became a social worker at Oshkosh Correctional Institution. Two years later, he trained to become a Probation and Parole Agent. In 2005, Smith began his current role as a Sex Offender Registry Specialist where he is currently responsible for 900 sex offenders in four counties.

Kuether stated Smith's ability to make those around him better defines Smith's greatness. "Some days I think I must know what it was like to be one of Michael Jordan's teammates, as I find I'm just looking on in awe as the master goes to work," said Kuether. "I would run to the ends of the earth to help Tom with an investigation because I know he would do the same for me, or anyone else in need of help."

Kuether added, "[Tom's] career should be placed on the pedestal it is so strongly deserving of."

Smith said, "I'm still very much in awe of the whole event and especially the evening; having had my parents there, my Father who is a retired DOC employee of 33 years and who suffered a stroke just a week before the event. I'm a very blessed man."